

Message Text

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SUBJ: LOPEZ PORTILLO INTERVIEW IN LOS ANGELES TIMES

1. IN EVENT YOU DO NOT HAVE, FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH CONTAINS FULL
TEXT OF PRESIDENT LOPEZ PORTILLO'S INTERVIEW IN THE LOS ANGELES
TIMES ON PAGE 1 OF THE APRIL 25 EDITION.

2. TIJUANA - THE COMPLEX PROBLEM OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION FROM
MEXICO INTO THE UNITED STATES CANNOT BE RESOLVED AS LONG AS IT
IS TREATED SIMPLY AS A "POLICE PROBLEM," ACCORDING TO MEXICAN
PRESIDENT JOSE LOPEZ PORTILLO.

CONTRARY TO WHAT MANY AMERICANS MIGHT THINK, THE MEXICAN LEADER
SAID DURING AN INTERVIEW WITH THE TIMES IN THIS BORDER CITY,
MEXICAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS DO SEE ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION AS A
PROBLEM "AND WE WANT TO RESOLVE IT."

"BUT IT IS NOT SIMPLE," THE 56-YEAR-OLD PRESIDENT ADDED. "WE
SEE IT AS A PROBLEM OF COMMERCE, A PROBLEM OF FINANCE, A PROBLEM
OF DEMOGRAPHY. . . WE CANNOT RESOLVE IT AS A POLICE PROBLEM."

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LOPEZ PORTILLO ENDED A TWO-DAY VISIT TO TIJUANA ON SUNDAY. IT WAS
HIS FIRST VISIT TO THE BORDER AREA SINCE BEING SELECTED MEXICO'S
PRESIDENT LAST JULY.

HIS INTERVIEW WITH THE TIMES WAS LIMITED TO ONE SUBJECT-THE ILLEGAL
IMMIGRATION OF THOUSANDS OF MEXICAN WORKERS INTO THE UNITED STATES

ALTHOUGH ILLEGAL ALIENS COME TO THE UNITED STATES FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD, THE MAJORITY COME FROM MEXICO, ACCORDING TO US IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS. ALMOST 90 PERCENT OF THE APPROXIMATELY 800,000 UNDOCUMENTED ALIENS CAUGHT IN THE UNITED STATES LAST YEAR WERE MEXICAN NATIONALS.

LOPEZ PORTILLO FRANKLY ACKNOWLEDGED DURING THE INTERVIEW THAT "FOR US THE PROBLEM IS A SOLUTION, A SOLUTION TO THE LACK OF WORK IN MEXICO."

"WE KNOW IT IS THE OBLIGATION OF MEXICO TO FIND ENOUGH WORK FOR OUR CITIZENS," HE SAID. "WE ARE DOING WHAT WE CAN." HOWEVER, THE MEXICAN PRESIDENT ADDED, "THERE ARE THINGS THE UNITED STATES CAN DO TO HELP STIMULATE THE MEXICAN ECONOMY."

"WE ARE A NATION THAT PRODUCES MANY THINGS WE COULD SELL TO THE UNITED STATES," HE SAID, "BUT AS OF NOW OUR LEVEL OF TRADE WITH YOU IS VERY POOR. WE WANT TO BRING IT UP TO A HIGHER LEVEL."

ASKED WHAT MEXICAN PRODUCTS HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE SOLD IN LARGER QUANTITIES IN THE UNITED STATES, LOPEZ PORTILLO MENTIONED SHOES AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS - SPECIALLY VEGETABLES.

"PRESENTLY WE CANNOT SELL AS MUCH AS WE MIGHT BECAUSE OF (UNITED STATES) TRADE RESTRICTIONS," HE SAID, "THIS WAS PART OF THE AGENDA WE DISCUSSED WHEN WE MET WITH PRESIDENT CARTER."

LOPEZ PORTILLO VISITED WASHINGTON FOR TWO DAYS OF DISCUSSIONS WITH CARTER LAST FEBRUARY.
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ASKED FOR HIS OPINION OF INCREASINGLY NEGATIVE PUBLIC REACTION IN THE UNITED STATES TO ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION FROM MEXICO, LOPEZ PORTILLO SAID IT IS BASED ON "AN INCORRECT VIEW OF THE SITUATION OR A LACK OF CORRECT INFORMATION."

"OUR WORKERS ARE BEING PORTRAYED AS CRIMINALS, AND AS THOUGH THEY ARE REPLACING NORTH AMERICAN WORKERS," HE SAID. "THE FACT IS THAT THEY CONTRIBUTE IN THEIR OWN HUMBLE WAY TO THE STRENGTH OF THE U.S. EMPLOYERS WHO WANT TO HIRE THEM."

"THEY PICK MANY OF YOUR CROPS AND DO OTHER JOBS THAT YOUR CITIZENS JUST WON'T DO BECAUSE THEY ARE HARD OR PAY POORLY," HE SAID.
"MANY MEXICAN WOMEN, FOR EXAMPLE, WORK AS DOMESTICS."

"THE PROBLEM OF THESE WORKERS IS LIKE THE PROBLEM OF DRUGS," LOPEZ PORTILLO SAID. "AS LONG AS THERE IS A DEMAND IN THE UNITED STATES, THEY WILL COME - FROM ONE COUNTRY OR ANOTHER. THAT IS A SIMPLE LAW OF ECONOMICS."

"BEFORE JUDGING THE MEXICAN WHO IS LOOKING FOR WORK, REMEMBER THAT THEIR HUMBLE WORK HAS HELPED THE U.S. ECONOMY GROW, AND THAT THIS WORK FORCE SHOULD BE PROTECTED BECAUSE THEY ARE HUMAN BEINGS WITH HUMAN RIGHTS," LOPEZ PORTILLO ADDED. "THEY ARE NOT CRIMINALS, BUT HONEST PEOPLE WHO WANT TO WORK."

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